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Our Vision:

“Transforming the world with greater knowledge and learning.”

Our mission is:

- To enrich people’s lives through research, teaching, learning and sharing of knowledge to push boundaries and deliver success.
- To be one of the world’s top seats of teaching and learning, providing a standout personalised student experience of the highest quality in an international context.
- To be one of the world’s top research-intensive universities, working with partners and stakeholders to undertake rigorous, relevant, impactful and excellent research.
- To ensure that social, cultural and economic impact is at the heart of everything we do.
- To build an integrated, collaborative and sustainable physical and digital infrastructure to underpin the University’s ambition.
- To be a progressive university where staff and students thrive within a culture of equality and diversity to enable them to achieve their aspirations.

Our values are:

- Innovation and relevance in our education, research and engagement.
- Independence and responsibility of thought and action.
- Sustainable partnerships with all our stakeholders to drive a culture of inclusion and accessibility.
- Respect for all, both within and beyond the University.
- An empowered and ambitious University of Aberdeen community where all have an opportunity to thrive.
Introduction

Our Vision: Transforming the world with greater knowledge and learning

People are at the heart of this vision. All the members of the Aberdeen family, be they alumni, students or staff, wherever they come from, will understand the vision and see their place in driving the University of Aberdeen forward. Our staff will be recruited because they are the very best or have the potential to be the very best. We will build a working environment which is inclusive and supportive; one which encourages and enables people to achieve their full career potential; one where equality and diversity are fundamental to everything we do; and one where the health, safety and wellbeing of our whole community are paramount.

We will work in partnership with our student body (Aberdeen University Students’ Association) to ensure that the educational experience is outstanding and every Aberdeen student grows as an active citizen, acquires leadership skills, and is better able to succeed in their future life course. Becoming a member of the Aberdeen family should last throughout life. One of our strengths is our global family of alumni and we will work to ensure that they feel connected to their alma mater wherever and whatever they do in the future.

Higher education transforms lives and our alumni will want to stay connected because of the wonderful and memorable education they received, in an environment of inclusivity and from a university committed to equality of opportunity for students, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds. We have reformed our undergraduate curriculum to offer a breadth of learning which sets Aberdeen apart from its competitors. We have revamped our postgraduate portfolio and will continue to develop this portfolio, ensuring that we attract students from across the socio-economic spectrum. In doing so, we will ensure that there is no barrier to learning for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

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An international focus is central to both the postgraduate and undergraduate experience at Aberdeen and will expose students to a rich variety of cultures on campus and a curriculum that is in keeping with international developments. At the same time students will feel a sense of belonging from the moment they engage with the University, regardless of where they come from or the length of their study. Setting challenging targets for improvements in retention and for overall improvements in performance, we will engender a sense of progress throughout our students’ time at Aberdeen – progress advanced by inspirational teaching which is research-led. We will encourage and instil a lifelong passion for the accumulation of knowledge; foster and reward excellence in teaching; and seamlessly blend traditional methods of debate and discussion alongside the use of new technology.

Aberdeen must embrace the digital world and the use of open data in all that it does. Today’s students expect, from the moment they receive an offer direct to their mobile device, to engage with the University easily and freely throughout their learning journey. We are committed to using the most up-to-date and varied methods of communications, whether face-to-face or through digital means, to make our engagement with students of a consistently high standard.

We will also ensure that students understand the importance of the co-curriculum. Aberdeen students will grow as active international citizens during their period of study and we will recognise, encourage and facilitate activities beyond their studies, such as work placements or volunteering, while enabling them to learn to reflect on how they have grown through these endeavours. We are also committed to preparing our graduates for working life when they leave university, and we will continue to develop strong partnerships with business and industry to keep up-to-date with their requirements. As citizens, our students need to understand the world and, for our undergraduates, we will instigate challenging targets for the proportion of students who spend a semester in an overseas university; and for all students we will increase the proportion who undertake a work placement.

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The University has a central role within the city of Aberdeen and the North East of Scotland, and a duty to contribute to their success and prosperity. We are committed to working with our regional partners across all sectors to deliver on this agenda. With our further education partners, particularly North East Scotland College, we are addressing the skills challenges of the North East. Together we are working on a regional skills strategy, meeting regional needs and contributing to the regional economy, boosting our joint economic contribution.

We have an outstanding track record of research success in disciplines linked to major drivers of the Scottish economy, particularly energy, medical sciences, biotechnology, food and drink, and financial services. Our links with all these sectors have been in place for many years and we develop them for business and wider community benefit. An example of this collaborative approach is the University’s Aberdeen Institute of Energy, which brings together and enhances the University’s long-established expertise in geosciences, engineering, energy law and economics, bringing experts in different disciplines together to tackle the issues facing this global sector.
Research and innovation are central to the kinds of economies and societies that we wish to see in the future, and research students are some of the central drivers in developing our vision. Their study of new drugs and therapies for common diseases and conditions including dementia, psychiatric disorders, arthritis, bone problems, and many forms of cancer need to prepare them for their future careers and to expose them to different ways of acquiring knowledge and to the changing ways in which research is being undertaken across the globe. Ultimately, we need an environment which attracts and international visitors by providing appropriate infrastructure and venues.

Research is central to Aberdeen’s very existence and our future success depends critically on continuing to improve our position in all research areas of the University. We will set challenging targets for the quality of our output and aim to increase research income and diversify its sources. One of our core values will be excellence in all areas of our research. Most of the world’s great challenges require multidisciplinary solutions from research undertaken by teams from varying disciplines and typically a number of institutions. We will develop cross-disciplinary institutes building on the success, for example, of the Aberdeen Institute of Energy and the Scottish Food Security Alliance. Our aim will be to provide a structure of support and to foster the conversations necessary for great multidisciplinary research and to support this we will develop state-of-the-art facilities.

It is also fair for our stakeholders to expect that, where research has led to results which can have an impact on society, everything will be done to maximise the public benefit of that work. This can manifest in many ways, but must always be based on the premise that the starting point is outstanding internationally recognised research. It will require close working relationships with industry, government, community, public and third sector partners to maximise the effectiveness of our impact.

The impact of our work is also fundamental to our role in leading on culture. We already have a rich and diverse cultural engagement programme which puts the University at the centre of the cultural life of the city and region. We will continue to work with local partners and external funders to strengthen the cultural offering of the University, identifying resources and building capacity to support a programme of development which is embedded in local, regional, national and international strategies. Highlights of this effort will include providing a year-round suite of opportunities and activities, exemplified through a prioritised list of core events, festivals and engagement activities. In delivering this agenda, we will act as a destination of choice for local, national and international visitors by providing appropriate infrastructure and venues.

The impact on the world of research conducted at the University of Aberdeen has been confirmed in the latest international rankings of research-intensive universities. Aberdeen is ranked top Scottish university at 55th in the world for the proportion of research appearing in the top 10% of international journals. The Leiden Ranking measures the scientific performance of 750 major universities worldwide. The ranking is based on over 25 years of bibliometric experience at the Centre for Science and Technology Studies (CWTS) of Leiden University in the Netherlands.

This follows our assessment as world leading for significant areas of our research in the UK-wide Research Excellence Framework 2014 – the first of its kind to examine the impact of university outputs on society, business and culture. Across the University, 76% of work assessed through the REF14 was deemed to be either ‘world leading’ or ‘internationally excellent’.

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Underpinning the success of the University of Aberdeen will be financial and environmental sustainability. We will look carefully at all aspects of expenditure to be able to assure all our stakeholders that every pound is being spent wisely. Universities need to be both effective and efficient and we will ensure Aberdeen is on a strong sustainable financial footing, with headroom to invest. At the same time we must remain mindful of our social responsibility. Equally important will be ensuring the integration of alumni relations with development; and building the foundations for a major fundraising campaign around the people, education, research and infrastructure that will ensure our future.

The reputation of the University of Aberdeen must be advanced if we are to achieve our goals. We will require to communicate the benefits and reasons to choose Aberdeen to all our stakeholders, regionally, nationally and internationally, ensuring we continue to listen and adapt to changing priorities. We will celebrate the successes of our students and staff and work with them and the broader community to promote and support the achievement of our strategic vision.

In summary, this Strategic Plan proposes that all aspects of an Aberdeen education will be interdependent to attain real success as a world-class research university. Our culture embraces the entire global Aberdeen family, our teaching and learning is alive to the changing needs of all our students and our research delivers sustainable benefits to society. We believe that this, with the support of a sustainable and environmentally conscious approach to improving our infrastructure, sets us apart in our ability to deliver an exceptional educational experience and to celebrate innovation and excellence with future generations.

The competitive advantage for students

University should be a place to grow, not only intellectually but also in wider personal development, acquiring the skills to stand out in today’s challenging employment market. Embedded in our student experience is a strong focus on preparing our students for the world beyond. We were first in Scotland to review and revamp our curriculum, and to underpin it with a suite of Aberdeen Graduate Attributes, which describe the aspirations that the University holds for its graduates, such as being critical thinkers, excellent communicators, and global citizens.

The STAR scheme (Students Taking Active Roles) gives opportunities for ambitious students to gain employability advantage through internships, mentoring, volunteering, peer support and facilitating skills to give Aberdeen graduates a huge advantage in their future career and life.

Our students expect and deserve to be at the forefront of the digital revolution in their learning and in their whole student experience. MyCurriculum and MyTimetable give new and returning students the means to make their own online course selection and timetable arrangements from anywhere in the world prior to arriving for the start of the academic year. This significant investment continues our ongoing programme to make the Aberdeen experience unique for all who come here, geared to the needs of today’s employers and to every individual fulfilling their ambitions for their future careers.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond
Principal and Vice-Chancellor
Our people; students, alumni and staff, have always been the basis of our success, indeed they have made outstanding contributions to public life over several centuries. In looking to the future, we aim to provide an environment and a culture which enriches the lives of our people, and enables them to realise their potential.

**People**

**Goal 1:**
To enhance further our caring culture of belonging and collegiality in the community of staff, students and alumni, focusing on excellence realising full potential.

**Goal 2:**
To attract and retain staff and students to a globally significant international institution strengthening capacity and excellence, in Aberdeen or another University location.

**Goal 3:**
To continue to foster a positive University culture in order that all are fully engaged and committed to our future and to be champions of Equality and Diversity.
To achieve our ambition, our staff and students will grow and develop, working in partnership with one another, schools, further education colleges, employers, trades unions and the third sector.

We are committed to developing leaders in our student and staff communities, and to bring this about, we will increase and strengthen opportunities, including increased exposure to business and industry for students and a well-defined programme of career development for staff.

We will build on our centuries-long track record of achievement and our heritage of care and transformation to deliver excellent global citizens and leaders for the future. Our strategy will continue to nurture intellectual curiosity and a spirit of partnership, in an encouraging international community which has an ambitious outlook and is in keeping with our founding principles.

To provide an outstanding working environment where all members of our staff community have the chance to thrive, and where policies delivering a fair workload for all, flexible working and family-friendly policies, will be addressed in a spirit of well-being and sustainability. The benefits derived from international experience including study or work overseas will also be considered integral to this development. Career fulfilment will be at the heart of our strategy for staff, and to achieve it, we commit to developing pathways and programmes that support promotion and embed succession planning.

Opportunities for excellence

Being part of the Aberdeen community brings unrivalled opportunities to aim for the top in your career. We have a strong portfolio of programmes to develop our staff as teachers, researchers, managers and leaders.

Our Centre for Academic Development provides strategic leadership and a single point of contact for staff seeking to develop further their teaching, learning and research practice within an integrated structure. This ranges from academic development for teaching staff, elearning and academic skills for students, and training and resources to support personal and professional growth and progression for researchers.

Every member of staff can take advantage of a wide portfolio of courses from IT programmes to management skills, with coaching and mentoring opportunities.

“We aim to provide an outstanding working environment where all members of our staff community have the chance to thrive.”
Family-friendly, environmentally committed

We work hard to ensure that our commitment to environmental sustainability is embedded into campus life, from the lecture hall to the coffee shop to our student accommodation – and now to our new nursery for the children of students and staff.

The new Rocking Horse Nursery underlines our commitment to a family-friendly campus community and also to sustainable and environmentally conscious infrastructure. The nursery provides a safe, nurturing and environmentally conscious setting in which the youngest members of the University community can learn, play and develop.

The new building will be the first fully certified Passivhaus build in the Scottish Higher Education sector and the first nursery in Scotland to adopt this energy efficient design concept which provides a high level of occupant comfort while using very little energy for heating or cooling.

We all have a responsibility to help reduce the impact we have on the environment and we've made recycling simple in all of our buildings with the introduction of a variety of recycling facilities. By consolidating our local suppliers we have significantly reduced vehicle emissions in the local community and we provide a free inter-campus bus which has proved to be hugely popular for travelling between our campuses and the student village at Hillhead.

Healthy working life

The wellbeing of our staff and students is a top priority and we are proud of providing exceptional opportunities to support this. The Aberdeen Sports Village and Aquatics Centre are unparalleled in Scotland, hosting an array of world-class sporting and exercise facilities.

Promoting Healthy Working Lives is a corporate commitment, and includes family-friendly policies, a ‘green’ travel programme, smoking policies to cover the entire health campus at Foresterhill, and campus catering underpinned by fairtrade and choice.

We have a duty to engage and communicate with the public on the progress and success of our research, on the regional, national and international stages. We have a considerable track record in integrating public engagement with our research and we intend to develop this further and provide an enhanced programme establishing ourselves more clearly as a key cultural player while inviting the community to share in our research. Students, alumni and staff will be given greater support and opportunity to serve as University ambassadors for public engagement at the local, national and international levels.

“We intend to strengthen the Aberdeen community by attracting the very best staff and students to a globally significant institution.”

Our community of alumni, friends and supporters is among the most encouraging in the university sector and reflects a deep understanding of our future. As an integral part of the engagement, through this strategy, we turn again to this community and invite it to partner with us in the advancement of innovations in teaching and learning and in pushing the boundaries of research and discovery. We believe this will strengthen the University and our wider community making it healthier, safer and more sustainable.
Goal 1:
To provide an outstanding educational environment reflecting the quality of an international institution, fostering a sense of community, supporting all students in achieving their ambitions.

Goal 2:
Working in partnership, to offer an exceptional, flexible and individualised educational experience that is demand driven for students in Aberdeen, at a distance, and full or part-time.

Goal 3:
To ensure every student has the opportunity to realise their potential by providing excellent research-led teaching, assessment and feedback.

Goal 4:
To equip our students with skills and experience which will allow them to maximise their opportunities as responsible global citizens upon graduation.
Generations of our graduates have progressed to become leaders of business, industry and public life at home and overseas. We aim to build on this heritage, continuing to equip our students with skills and experience which will allow them to maximise their opportunities, either in the world of work or in continued academic endeavour.

From the first point of contact with our students, regardless of background or pathway to university, we will support their educational development and achievement by defining shared expectations and tailoring inductions and learning to individual need.

Our students should feel part of a supported Aberdeen community from the outset and continue to feel part of the Aberdeen family as alumni. This sense of belonging will be achieved through a personalised educational experience, improved levels of student engagement, increased retention and peer-to-peer initiatives. We actively encourage our students to acquire skills beyond their studies and provide a host of opportunities including volunteering, state-of-the-art sports facilities, a wide range of clubs and societies, along with individual pastoral and spiritual support.

We are committed to continue providing the very best student experience and academic rigour, working in close partnership with the student community and delivering teaching and learning that really set our graduates apart. We will provide an environment that supports all students, whether undergraduate or postgraduate, to attain or exceed ambitions in their chosen fields. Catering for the individual and recognising changing demand, we will deliver research-led teaching and learning through a variety and blend of media including a digitalised experience for students in Aberdeen and beyond. This level of flexibility will require offering an equivalent learning experience for both full and part-time study.

We will remain vigilant to ways in which teaching and learning can be enhanced and are committed to the future development of our facilities, whether physical or digital. We intend to make significant investment in our digital capacity in order to allow students to learn as flexibly as required. Our learning environment will provide a stimulus to an outstanding education and will be enabled by the most up-to-date and future-proofed digital technology to complement the well-established systems of personal contact between tutors and students.

Working with our alumni, partners in business, industry, the public sector and the third sector, we will continually review student requirements and in turn improve employability skills. By helping students take up opportunities we will enable them to grow academically and socially, learn to work individually and cooperatively, and work with communities and employers, thus creating the leaders of tomorrow. We will extend this way of working to our international efforts, encouraging student exchanges and building international educational partnerships.

Celebrating talent and achievement

At Aberdeen it’s never too early to make an impact on the world, and our students get the inspiration, support and opportunity to do just that.

A team of undergraduates who invented a new diagnostic test for a fatal disease collected a hat-trick of awards last year in one of the world’s leading and hotly contested science competitions.

Competing against 260 teams from universities across the world at the iGEM (International Genetically Engineered Machine) competition in Boston, the team was recognised for its achievement in detecting African Sleeping Sickness.

The students had the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills in a real research environment and created a device which costs less than £60, putting it potentially within reach of healthcare systems in developing countries with greatest need.

“Our students should feel part of a supported Aberdeen community from the outset and continue to feel part of the Aberdeen family as alumni.”
The University and indeed the region and city of Aberdeen have been international in outlook for centuries. In keeping with the University’s role in this tradition, we will ensure that all students are part of an international community and gain the benefits of a learning experience, made richer by that community. We will build on our existing partnerships with the further education sector, particularly North East Scotland College, to encourage more young people to take up articulation opportunities into university and thus improve access to higher education particularly for people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Already 120 countries are represented in our student population, and we continue to attract both students and academic staff from across the globe to broaden our culture and understanding. Specifically, we will encourage international mobility for a greater number of students and staff and enhance the curriculum to expand our knowledge of development internationally.

Technology and partnerships to drive our business

The North East of Scotland Shared Data Centre is a pioneering collaboration with Robert Gordon University and North East Scotland College to deliver both business and environmental benefits.

Based on King’s College campus and hosting the IT infrastructure for all three institutions, this £1.2 million energy saving project has reduced the sector’s carbon footprint by over 1400 tonnes annually and slashed its energy bills by more than a quarter of a million pounds each year. It has also scooped two national awards recognising sustainable initiatives within the UK public sector – the prestigious Green Gown Award, and a Scottish Green Energy Award.

World-leading research requires a lot of power. The University’s High Performance Computing (HPC) service enables researchers from a wide range of disciplines across the institution to process large amounts of data and solve complex computational problems. By aggregating computing power, this £300,000 investment plays an important role in our research infrastructure, drastically reducing the time needed to analyse highly complex data.

The HPC’s rapid turnaround and high output not only meet researchers’ demands but also help drive forward results and discoveries, and turn research into products and services that can benefit society.

Aberdeen excellence for Korea

The University of Aberdeen will establish its first international campus in Korea in 2016, an achievement that serves as a testament to the University’s ambitions to position itself as a global institution at the forefront of energy-related research and teaching.

Located in Hadong in the south of the country, the campus will specialise in offering courses in offshore-related disciplines, including MSc courses in Topside Engineering, Subsea Engineering, Petroleum Engineering, and the University’s MBA in Energy Management.

In addition, the campus will provide unique research opportunities thanks to the impressive facilities available on site, and provide students with the chance to develop their international experience while raising the University’s profile in a key region of the world.
Our research continues to have a measurable impact on the world, often exceeding expectations and making contributions of great significance to society. Our recent Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014) results showed that overall 76% of our assessed research was world leading or internationally excellent. With respect to the impact of this research, 85% was judged to be world leading or internationally excellent.

Research & Knowledge Exchange

Goal 1:
To strengthen our position as a world class, research intensive university, focusing on areas of excellence.

Goal 2:
To increase the non-academic impact of our research on the world through an enhanced portfolio of knowledge exchange activities with industry, business and society.
Many of the problems facing the world require solutions achieved through multidisciplinary working and there are some parts of our research portfolio where interdisciplinary or team working is relevant. We are in a strong position to respond to central global challenges and will continue to develop our interdisciplinary working across the University to achieve this. We also recognise the importance in some disciplines of the work of the lone scholar. We will continue to support such research endeavours wherever excellence can be demonstrated.

Central to much of our work is partnership with the people who will ultimately be using or affected by the research. We will strengthen our relationships with private, public or third sector users of our work, frequently joining with them to help shape the research. Our research has always been important to the development of Scotland and the UK, and more specifically to the North East of Scotland. Through participation in regional, national and international initiatives and strategic partnerships, we will exploit opportunities to enhance this contribution, especially in the development of national policy. We will strengthen mechanisms to increase our success rates in research funding with tailored stakeholder engagement. We will continue to support the successful commercialisation of intellectual property arising from research.

We intend to build further upon this position of strength by building capacity and ensuring we provide an environment and culture where there is an expectation of excellence and where our researchers thrive.

We also wish to increase recognition by the international research community that we are a key player on the world stage in our specialist areas. To do this, our support, whether in terms of facilities, physical infrastructure or staff development, has to be amongst the best in the world, allowing us to be considered a centre of excellence in our chosen fields.

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Empowering communities to engage with our research is central to our core mission and values, driven by the creativity and enthusiasm of our University community and underpinned by a vibrant annual programme of support, training and opportunity.

Our Public Engagement team supports a culture of professional development and opportunity for staff and students to undertake innovative engagement activity that involves people of all ages and interests. We value public engagement and its role in fostering debate and facilitating impact. We have introduced annual competitions and incentives, such as the Principal’s Prize for Public Engagement, to help encourage and reward those getting involved.

Each year, we deliver a sector-leading programme featuring hundreds of events and reaching tens of thousands of people – including the general public, policy makers, teachers, school students and business communities. A focal point is our annual University May Festival, positioning the University at the heart of Aberdeen’s cultural scene. Further afield, our involvement in major UK and European initiatives gives the University a prolific role in engaged research and policy, built around principles of openness, accessibility and partnership.

“Empowering communities to engage with our research is central to our core mission and values, driven by the creativity and enthusiasm of our University community and underpinned by a vibrant annual programme of support, training and opportunity.”
Farmers go green with Cool Farm Tool

The Cool Farm Tool is an example of Aberdeen research which placed the University top in the UK for Agriculture, Veterinary and Food Science research in the REF14 assessment of research quality across UK universities.

Recent studies estimate that agriculture contributes up to 25% of global greenhouse gas emissions and is the main source of emissions in food supply chains.

The Cool Farm Tool is a free-to-use calculator for the whole farming supply chain to measure the carbon footprint of crop and livestock products and test alternative management options to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The tool, originally developed by Dr Jon Hillier and colleagues at the University’s Environmental Modelling Group, in partnership with Unilever and the Sustainable Food Lab, is now a multi-sector collaboration being taken forward by the not-for-profit organisation Cool Farm Alliance.

Leading the world in nutrition

The new Rowett Institute for Nutrition and Health building at the Foresterhill campus will secure the place of the University at the forefront of scientific research into nutrition and health.

The £37 million state-of-the-art facility opens in 2016 and is positioned alongside the Institute for Medical Sciences, Health Sciences Building, and the excellent teaching facilities of the Suttie Centre. This development brings together food, medical researchers and clinicians on one of the largest health campuses in Europe to collaboratively progress their world-leading work.

The new building will boast the most advanced Human Nutrition Unit in the UK, in which volunteers will help scientists shed new light on the complex relationship between food, society, behaviour and health.

Engagement with wider society and making a positive difference to people’s lives through the impact of our research is an integral part of our raison d’être. We will enhance our public engagement activities, making them central to our academic endeavour. Through our efforts, we will expand our cultural presence locally, regionally and nationally. We will develop the University of Aberdeen campus as a destination of choice for local, national, and international visitors by providing appropriate infrastructure, venues and access, thus playing a role in the cultural development of the city and region. We will provide opportunities and activities building on the research, teaching and wider cultural offerings of the University, exemplified through a prioritised list of core events, festivals and engagement activities.

We already work closely with our partners in business, industry and the public sector to ensure that our research has social, cultural and economic impact. We will expand our influence with partners by identifying further their needs, and through the provision of bespoke solutions to support economic development. Our research expertise also lends itself to informing policy in key areas for societal benefit. We will build on our established networks and continue to inform debate and practice in health, local government and the third sector.

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